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ABSTRACT

Reports on teacher education calling for reform of undergraduate courses and curricula in arts and sciences, while eliminating the undergraduate degree in education do not adequately reflect the realities of the classroom. The Carnegie and the Holmes reports, among others, claim that prematurely specializing undergraduate education students causes them to miss out on much of the intellectual development that a liberal arts education affords. In reality, however, courses in English and education for undergraduates interact positively with each other, and the loss of undergraduate education courses signals a loss of focus for prospective English teachers. English education classes provide a purposeful context for learning English, that of demonstrating the humanities to others. With a student body that is growing older and more experienced, and with very dubious fifth-year programs becoming all too prevalent, college administrators need to reexamine undergraduate programs, keeping English and education interrelated. Key faculty, such as those who work in both English and education, whether consulted or not, should participate in making changes in undergraduate and graduate courses for prospective teachers. (SKC)

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EDUCATING ENGLISH

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The dozens of reports on teacher education in the last four years have shown that it is the education of teachers which is at issue, not merely a strand of their preparation. The reports demonstrate that radical reform of education is necessary for any kind of change to occur. The Carnegie Report even argues that unless all its recommendations are taken, probably none can be accomplished. Because the proposals have to be negotiated with states, with legislators, with voters and most of all with faculty, it is not likely that all that is asked for will occur. Yet these calls for reform have interested more leaders than have past efforts. We have already heard from the governors and many state legislators on reform. Some people have remarked on the silence of the faculty in the face of the proposals; others have observed that many state education departments have just completed redesigns that have been years in the making and that these designs conflict with many of the key features of the reform proposals. One proposal to which the 102 institutions in the Holmes Group have committed themselves, a proposal echoed in the Carnegie Report (70-73), is the two-fold effort to upgrade the undergraduate arts and sciences programs while eliminating the undergraduate degree in education. I have some concerns about such action. I will confine my remarks to that

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proposal and examine its implications for English and education.

The Holmes Report addresses the issue in its section on required changes to meet new goals, the first two of its recommendations aiming at arts and sciences.

> We urge that our universities take three steps to strengthen education in academic subjects, as accompaniments to the elimination of undergraduate education majors. One is to sharply revise the undergraduate curriculum, so that future teachers can study the subjects they will teach with instructors who model fine teaching and who understand the pedagogy of their material. A second step is to organize academic course requirements and courses so that undergraduate students can gain a sense of the intellectual structure and boundaries of their disciplines, rather than taking a series of disjointed, prematurely specialized fragments. (Holmes 16)

We know that English is an interdisciplinary study, comprised of such disciplines as literature, linguistics, composition and categories such as rhetoric, technical communications, creative writing, film, American Studies and English Education. The attempt to focus these parts of English, occasionally separate departments themselves, so that they resemnble an "intellectual structure" is a constant struggle. As James Kincaid said in the ADE Bulletin a year ago, "English majors emerge with little idea of what they have studied or of what constitutes the discipline or its assumptions. We leave it to the student to infer theoretical models, methods, approaches; instructors seem to do all they can to keep such things secret" (Kincaid 11). We haven't made it clear what English is, it appears, even though we have continued to try.

While advisement, curriculum decisions and hiring practices are ways we try to define what we do, an interdisciplinary department by definition cannot resolve such issues easily. We do try to cluster certain courses, usually literature courses, in the student's program, but it doesn't often work well. A half dozen courses in British, world and American liteature, combined with linguistics, advanced composition and perhaps some creative writing courses may represent a college English major, but we are seldom satisfied that the major meets the goals we had in mind.

Nevertheless, the Holmes Group and the Carnegie Commission believe that "when students come to pursue their professional studies [in the fifth year of their program] . . . they must come already equipped with a sound command of the undergirding discipline. Clearly, teacher education is dependent upon the arts and sciences, consistent with the primary disciplines" (Holmes 46). The undergirding discipline is being asked to do a great deal and prospective teachers are seen as approaching the fifth year to build upon what they have learned. The focus for the discipline is left to the continuing struggle of the department. Any argument that an English major itself will provide the best background for teaching English, without the focusing function of English Education courses, seems suspect to me.

For prospective teachers, the focusing element in the English major is the set of English Education courses, taken concurrently in the undergraduate program. English Education courses in the teaching of literature, reading, writing and language, all with appropriate field experiences, will provide a context and a focus for studying English. The context for learning English is in part a thinking about how to

share what is learned, how to tell a story, how to make personal the poems just read by sharing with other human beings. Interpretation as a shared set of negotiated meanings is a form of teaching. The best learning comes from an interrelated program which includes the reading of poetry, for example, and learning how the reading of poetry takes place. The best preparation for a prospective English teacher is an interrelated program of education and English. If that program doesn't come into play as the major is being experienced, one of the richest contexts for learning it in the first place is omitted.

When we teach Chaucer, we teach a method for reading Chaucer. Our students learn from us how to behave as teachers. Slevin, in speaking of writing teachers, says "successful academic performance, and probably even successful learning, are more a consequence of how you control the normative discourse than of what you believe, feel, think, or even know about the material being studied" (Slevin 549). He is right. It is for that reason that beginning teachers imitate the teachers who have influenced them most. They begin by attempting to control the normative discourse in ways that their own teachers controlled it. They never quite succeed in the imitation, but it is method in which they are immersed. Those who think that we can separate form and content, method from literature, will be reminded that we slip into old rhetorical modes when we do so. Methods courses explore the very interconnections of our disciplines by asking why and how and how we know. Methods classes are the key focus for students learning English in order to teach it. Without methods classes for prospective teachers of English, we have only the residue of disparate courses accumulated. No focus exists by virtue of a dozen or so courses in English alone, no sense of mission,

no belief that the profession means something beyond examining texts, no sense that students themselves give great meaning to our endeavor.

If we treat education and English courses as separate entities in time by making one program the prerequisite of the other, we lose the very humanizing element of their interplay. When English majors read Gatsby in the morning, Hamlet in the afternoon, and in an evening English Education class ask why other people should read these works, they are turned back into the works and out toward others to find an answer to two questions: why read the works at all? and why should students generally read them? Such questions have a fine focusing quality to them. English Education students often have to rethink parts of their major when they get to their English Education classes because they may not have read as widely as they now see they need to, or they didn't understand the linguistics assignment well enough to apply the principles to other classrooms, or in their class in modern poetry the instructor's interpretation was the only acceptable one and they can't imagine how that behavior has any validity and it won't be their behavior when they become teachers. When a common background is brought to English Education classes by majors, all delight in past experiences with a poem or a novel and they imagine sharing it with their own future students, or they watch one of their classmates on videotape begin sharing a poem with high school students. It is possible to speak of theory with majors when concrete examples of our life's work are in front of us. The class becomes a microcosm of the humanities, demonstrating to those in it what is meant by studying English. The seeds were there before the class, but without the focusing element of the undergraduate English Education classes, the English studied has

less of a purposeful context, less of a sense of urgency and importance.

Yet, at many major research institutions, Schools of Education have had enough of the criticism and impossible political situations in which they find themselves. They try to carve out a small number of education classes in an undergraduate program and perhaps a student teaching experience that comes far too late in their programs to provide anything more than summative evaluations. Schools of Education try to be tactful in justifying courses which those on curriculum committees never had and don't believe anyone else needs. And they know that politically they have to give something up in order to bargain. If the undergraduate education degree is eliminated, then the arts and sciences faculty may be supportive of graduate education programs. But that is not, of course, the educational reason we all want. The arguments seem to be too readily given up by the Holmes Group and others. Let me try one. In most programs that I know, the secondary education student must major in an academic discipline. That major is the same one taken by those who do not plan to teach. Why eliminate a program which itself helps the arts and sciences students to focus their major and which would be an excellent background of experiences for a Master's Degree in Teaching, far better than the major alone, as I have suggested? Surely those 102 institutions who are doing away with undergraduate education programs do not do so merely because arts and sciences faculty would disagree that education courses give focus and meaning to the academic major. Surely they don't believe that students are too young and need more time to pursue a liberal arts degree without interference from professional matters. The typical college student today is 35 years of age; she attends school part-time while working full-time.

"Only 2 million of the nation's 12 million students live in campus residence halls. Between 1974 and 1984, the number of college students increased 18 percent--but only one in five was in the 'traditional' 18-24 age group, and the number of part-time college students increased 33 percent" (NEA 4). Whether our curricula should reflect the different student body will depend upon how these facts are perceived and how they mix on respective campuses. However, the length of time for educating teachers is involved here. By giving up two undergraduate years where students can learn that integration of learning theory, knowledge of adolescents and, say, literature, are essential, we lose potential enrichment. We would also say through our programs that arts and sciences and education are radically different subjects and should be kept separated. We would extend a philosophy to our graduates that is unimaginative and divisive, instead of bold and unifying.

In order to revise the undergraduate curriculum when the education degree is eliminated, pedagogical studies at the undergraduate level would be changed. The Holmes Report calls for focus on "the pedagogy of specific subjects. Generic undergraduate methods courses must be replaced with subject matter-oriented studies of teaching and learning" (Holmes 17). They say that answering the question of what "these new pedagogical studies" would "look like . . . is a large part of our work in the next five years" (Holmes 17). That English Education eliminated the generic methods course over twenty years ago seems to be over-looked. Practitioners who work in both English and education represent a special resource who appear not to have been consulted in these reports and who must be consulted for new masters' programs. If key practitioners are by-passed in this effort of reform, whether that

effort comes from state legislators, governors, state departments of education or arts and sciences departments, most of the changes will be cosmetic or worse.

I have questioned an issue that the Holmes Group has already decided for itself. I am not so sure that all of those practitioners whose schools of education have joined, however, are aware that they have agreed to sign away their undergraduate program and some of the universities which have already reorganized their fifth years may not have improved the program by doing so. I have cautioned that the separation in time of the liberal arts and education may affect both negatively. In the process of reform, key programs may be lost. If so, we will have set undergraduate and graduate education for prospective teachers back over 20 years. On the other hand, if we participate where we can, even if not asked, we may through reasoning together--Deans of Education, arts and sciences faculty, education faculty and state officials--make the education of teachers stronger than it was before.

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ABSTRACT

Reports on the education of teachers have called for reform of undergraduate courses and curricula in arts and sciences, while eliminating the undergraduate degree in education. Courses in English and education for undergraduates interact with each other and the loss of education courses signals a loss of focus for prospective English teachers. English education classes provide a purposeful context for learning English, demonstrating the humanities. With a changing student body and with very dubious fifth-year programs, we need to reexamine our undergraduate programs, keeping English and education interrelated. Key faculty have to be consulted when making changes in undergraduate and graduate courses for prospective teachers.